(3)

A LETTER

FROM

EDMUND BURKE, Esq.

IN

VINDICATION OF HIS CONDUCT,

WITH REGARD TO THE

AFFAIRS OF IRELAND,

ADDRESSED TO

THOMAS BURGH, Esq.

Member of the Irish Parliament.

SECOND EDITION.

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A

LETTER

FROM

EDMUND BURKE, Esq.

TO

HIS CONSTITUENTS,

ON

THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.

A

LETTER, &c.

To THOMAS BURGH, *Esq.*

My dear Sir,

I Don't know in what manner I am to thank you properly for the very friendly ſolicitude you have been ſo good as to expreſs for my reputation. The concern you have done me the honour to take in my affairs, will be an ample indemnity for all that I may ſuffer from the rapid judgments of thoſe who chooſe to form their opinions of men, not from the life, but from their portraits in a news-

news-paper. I confeſs to you, that my frame of mind is ſo contracted, I have in me ſo little of the conſtitution of a great man, that I am more gratified with a very moderate ſhare of approbation from thoſe few who know me, than I ſhould be with the moſt clamorous applauſe from the multitudes who love to admire at a due diſtance. I am not, however, ſtoic enough to be able to affirm with truth, or hypocrite enough affectedly to pretend, that I am wholly unmoved at the difficulty which you and other of my friends in Ireland have found in vindicating my conduct towards my native country: it undoubtedly hurts me in ſome degree; but the wound is not very deep. If I had ſought popularity in Ireland, when, in the cauſe of that country, I was ready to ſacrifice, and did ſacrifice, a much nearer, a much more immediate, and much more advantageous popularity here, I ſhould find myſelf perfectly

fectly unhappy, becauſe I ſhould be totally diſappointed in my expectations; becauſe I ſhould diſcover, when it was too late, what common-ſenſe might have told me very early, that I riſqued the capital of my fame in the moſt diſadvantageous lottery in the world. But I acted then, as I act now, and I hope I ſhall act always, from a ſtrong impulſe of right, and from motives in which popularity, either here, or there, has but a very little part: with the ſupport of that conſciouſneſs, I can bear a good deal of the coquettry of publick opinion; which has her caprices and muſt have her ways. *Miſeri quibus intentata nitet.* I, too, have had my holiday of popularity in *Ireland*; I have even heard of an intention to erect a ſtatue. I believe my intimate acquaintance know how little that idea was encouraged by me; and I was ſincerely glad that it never took effect. Such honours belong excluſively to the

tomb, the natural and only period of human inconſtancy, with regard either to deſert or to opinion; for they are the very ſame hands which erect, that very frequently (and ſometimes with reaſon enough) pluck down the ſtatue. Had ſuch an unmerited and unlooked-for compliment been paid to me two years ago, the pavements of the piece might at this hour have the advantage of ſeeing actual ſervice, while they were moving, according to the law of projectiles, to the windows of the A——y G——l, or of my old friend *M—k M—n*.

To ſpeak ſeriouſly, let me aſſure you, my dear Sir, that, though I am not permitted to rejoice at all its effects, there is not one man at your ſide of the water more pleaſed to ſee the ſituation of *Ireland* ſo proſperous, as that ſhe can afford to throw away her friends. She has obtained ſolely by her own efforts the fruits

of

Irish applauded for extorting concessions by the show of insurrection.

of a great victory, which I am very ready to allow that the beſt efforts of her beſt well-wiſhers here could not have done for her ſo effectually in a great number of years, and perhaps could not have done at all. I could wiſh, however, merely for the ſake of her own dignity, that, in turning her poor relations and antiquated friends out of doors, (though one of the moſt common effects of new proſperity,) ſhe had thought proper to diſmiſs us with fewer tokens of unkindneſs. It is true, that there is no ſort of danger in affronting men who are not of importance enough to have any truſt of miniſterial, of royal, or of national honour to ſurrender. The unforced and unbought ſervices of humble men, who have no medium of influence in great aſſemblies, but through the precarious force of reaſon, muſt be looked upon with contempt, by thoſe who, by their wiſdom and ſpirit, have improved the

critical moment of their fortune, and have debated with authority againſt puſillanimous diſſent and ungracious compliance, at the head of forty thouſand men.

Such feeble auxiliaries (as I talk of) to ſuch a force employed againſt ſuch reſiſtance, I muſt own, in the preſent moment, very little worthy of your attention; yet, if one were to look forward, it ſcarcely ſeems altogether politick to beſtow ſo much liberality of invective on the Whiggs of this kingdom, as I find it has been the faſhion to do both in and out of parliament. That you ſhould pay compliments in ſome tone or other, whether ironical or ſerious, to the miniſter from whoſe imbecillity you have extorted what you could never obtain from his bounty, is not unnatural in the firſt effuſions of parliamentary gratitude to that miniſter, for the early and voluntary benefits

nefits he has conferred upon Ireland. It might appear that you were wanting to the triumph of his ſurrender, if you did not lead ſome of his enemies captive before him; neither could you feaſt him with decorum, if his particular taſte were not conſulted. A miniſter who has never defended his meaſures in any other way than by railing at his adverſaries, cannot have his palate made all at once to the reliſh of poſitive commendation. I cannot deny but that on this occaſion there was diſplayed a great deal of the good breeding, which conſiſts in the accommodation of the entertainment to the reliſh of the gueſts.

But that ceremony being paſt, it would not be unworthy of the wiſdom of Ireland, to conſider what conſequences the extinguiſhing every ſpark of freedom in this country may have upon your own liberties. You are at this inſtant fluſhed with victory,

Influence of the crown so great as to ensure passive obedience.

victory, and full of the confidence natural to recent and untried power. We are in a temper equally natural, though very different:—We feel as men do, who, having placed an unbounded reliance on their force, have found it totally to fail on trial:—We feel faint and heartleſs, and without the ſmalleſt degree of ſelf-opinion:—in plain words, we are *cowed*. When men give up their violence and injuſtice without a ſtruggle, their condition is next to deſperate. Where no art, no management is neceſſary to abate their pride, and overcome their prejudices; and their uneaſineſs only excites an obſcure and feeble rattling in their throat; their final diſſolution ſeems not far off. In this miſerable ſtate we are ſtill further depreſſed by the over-bearing influence of the crown: it acts with the officious cruelty of a mercenary nurſe, who, under pretence of tenderneſs, ſtifles us with our clothes, and plucks the pillow from our heads. *Injectu multæ veſtis opprimi ſenem*

Influence of the Crown so great as to
require stop the Audience.

ſenem jubet. Under this influence, we have ſo little will of our own, that, even in any apparent activity we may be got to aſſume, I may ſay, without any violence to ſenſe, and with very little to language, we are merely paſſive. We have yielded to your demands this ſeſſion; in the laſt ſeſſion we refuſed to prevent them. In both caſes, the paſſive and the active, our principle was the ſame. Had the crown pleaſed to retain the ſpirit with regard to Ireland, which ſeems to be now all directed to America, we ſhould have neglected our own immediate defence, and ſent over the laſt man of our militia, to fight with the laſt man of your volunteers.

To this influence, the principle of action, the principle of policy, and the principle of union of the preſent minority, are oppoſed. Theſe principles of the oppoſition are the only thing which preſerves

ſerves a ſingle ſymptom of life in the nation. That oppoſition is compoſed of the far greater part of the independent property and independent rank in the kingdom, of whatever is moſt untainted in character, of whatever ability remains unextinguiſhed in the people; and all which tends to draw the attention of foreign countries upon this. It is now in its final and concluſive ſtruggle: it has to ſtruggle againſt a force to which, I am afraid, it is not equal. The whole kingdom of Scotland ranges with the venal, the unprincipled, and the wrong principled of this; and if the kingdom of Ireland thinks proper to paſs into the ſame camp, we ſhall certainly be obliged to quit the field. In that caſe, if I know any-thing of this country, another conſtitutional oppoſition can never be formed on it: and, if this be impoſſible, it will be at leaſt as much ſo (if there can be degrees in impoſſibility) to have a conſtitutional

tutional adminiſtration at any future time. The poſſibility of the former is the only ſecurity for the exiſtence of the latter. Whether the preſent adminiſtration be in the leaſt like one, I muſt venture to doubt, even in the honey-moon of the Iriſh fondneſs to Lord North, which has ſucceeded to all their ſlapping and ſcratching.

If liberty cannot maintain its ground in this kingdom, I am ſure that it cannot have any long continuance in yours. Our liberty might now and then jar and ſtrike a diſcord with that of Ireland; the thing is poſſible; but ſtill the inſtruments might play in concert: but, if ours be unſtrung, yours will be hung up on a peg, and both will be mute for ever. Your new military force may give you confidence; and it ſerves for a turn: but you and I know that it has no root;

it is not perennial, and would prove but a poor ſhelter for your liberty, when this nation, having no intereſt in its own, could only look upon yours with the eyes of envy and diſguſt. I cannot, therefore, help thinking, and telling you what, with great ſubmiſſion I think, that, if the Parliament of Ireland be ſo zealous of the ſpirit of our common conſtitution as ſhe ſeems to be, it was not ſo diſcreet to mix with the panegyrick on the miniſter ſo large a portion of acrimony to the independent part of this nation. You never received any ſort of injury from them, and you are grown to that degree of importance, that the diſcourſes in your parliament will have a much greater effect on our immediate fortune, than our converſation can have upon yours:—in the end they will ſeriouſly affect both.

I have

I have looked back upon our conduct, and our public converſations, in order to diſcover what it is that can have given you offence. I have done ſo, becauſe I am ready to admit, that to offend you without cauſe, would be as contrary to true policy, as, I am ſure, it muſt be to the inclinations of almoſt every one of us.—About two years ago Lord Nugent moved ſix propoſitions in favour of Ireland, in the Houſe of Commons. At the time of the motions, and during the debate, Lord North was either wholly out of the houſe, or engaged in other matters of buſineſs or pleaſantry. In the remoteſt receſſes of the Weſt-Saxon corner, he took no part whatſoever in the affair; But it was ſuppoſed his neutrality was more inclined towards the ſide of favour. The mover being a perſon in office, was, however, the only indication that was given of ſuch a leaning.

We, who ſupported the propoſitions, finding them better reliſhed than at firſt we looked for, purſued our advantage, and began to open a way for more eſſential benefits to Ireland: on the other hand, thoſe who had hitherto oppoſed them in vain, redoubled their efforts, and became exceedingly clamorous. Then it was, that Lord North found it neceſſary to come out of his faſtneſs, and to interpoſe between the contending parties. In this character of mediator, he declared, that, if any thing beyond the firſt ſix reſolutions ſhould be attempted, he would oppoſe the whole; but that, if we reſted there, the original motions ſhould have his ſupport. On this a ſort of converſation took place between him and the managers of the Iriſh buſineſs, in which the ſix reſolutions were to be conſidered as a ſort of *uti poſſidetis*, and to be held ſacred.

By

By this time other parties began to appear: a good many of the trading towns and manufactures of various kinds took the alarm; petitions crowded in upon one another; and the bar was occupied by a formidable body of council. Lord North was ſtaggered by this new battery. He is not of a conſtitution to encounter ſuch an oppoſition as had then riſen, when there were no other objects in view than thoſe that were then before the houſe. In order not to loſe him, we were obliged to abandon, bit by bit, the moſt conſiderable parts of the original agreement.

In ſeveral parts, however, he continued fair and firm. For my own part, I acted, as I truſt I commonly do, with deciſion; I ſaw very well, that the things we had got were of no great conſideration; but they were, even in their defects, ſomewhat leading. I was in hopes that we might

might obtain gradually, and by parts, what we might attempt at once, and in the whole, without ſucceſs; that one conceſſion would lead another; and that the people of England diſcovering, by a progreſſive experience, that none of the conceſſions actually made were followed by the conſequences they had dreaded, their fears from what they were yet to yield would conſiderably diminiſh. But that to which I attached myſelf the moſt particularly was, to fix the principle of a free trade in all the ports of theſe iſlands, as founded in juſtice, and beneficial to the whole, but principally to this the ſeat of the ſupreme power; and this I laboured to the utmoſt of my might, upon general principles, illuſtrated by all the commercial detail with which my little enquiries in life were able to furniſh me. I ought to forget ſuch trifling things as thoſe which concern myſelf; and, poſſibly,

ſibly, I might have forgotten them, if the Lord Advocate of Scotland had not, in a very flattering manner, revived them in my memory, in a full houſe, in this ſeſſion. He told me, that my arguments, ſuch as they were, made him change the opinion with which he had come into the houſe ſtrongly impreſſed. I am ſure, that, at the time, at leaſt twenty more told me the ſame thing. I certainly ought not to take their ſtyle of compliment as a teſtimony to fact; neither do I: but all this ſhewed ſufficiently, not what they thought of my ability, but what they ſaw of my zeal. I could ſay more in proof of the effects of that zeal, and of the unceaſing induſtry with which I then acted, both in my endeavours which were apparent, and thoſe that were not ſo viſible. Let it be remembered I ſhewed thoſe diſpoſitions while the parliament of England was in a cap-

a capacity to deliberate, and in a ſituation to refuſe; when there was ſomething to be riſqued here, by being ſuſpected of a partiality to Ireland; when there was an honourable danger attending the profeſſion of friendſhip to you, which heightened its reliſh, and made it worthy of a reception in manly minds: But, as for the awkward and nauſeous parade of debate without oppoſition, the flimſy device of tricking out neceſſity, and diſguiſing it in the habit of choice, the ſhallow ſtratagem of defending by argument what all the world muſt perceive is yielded to force; theſe are a ſort of acts of friendſhip, which I am ſorry that any of my countrymen ſhould require of their real friends: they are things not to my taſte; and, if they are looked upon as teſts of friendſhip, I deſire for one, that I may be conſidered as an enemy. —What party-purpoſe did my conduct

anſwer

anſwer at that time? I acted with Lord North; I went to all the miniſterial meetings: and he and his aſſociates in office will do me the juſtice to ſay, that, aiming at the concord of the empire, I made it my buſineſs to give her conceſſions all the value of which they were capable; whilſt ſome of thoſe who were covered with his favours, derogated from them, treated them with contempt, and openly threatened to oppoſe them. If I had acted with my deareſt and moſt valued friends; if I had acted with the Marquis of Rockingham, or the Duke of Richmond, in that ſituation; I could not have attended more to their honour, or endeavoured more earneſtly to give efficacy to the meaſures I had taken in common with them. The return which I, and all who acted as I did, have met with from him, does not make me repent the conduct which I there held.

As to the reſt of the gentlemen with whom I have the honour to act, they did not then, or at any other time, make a party-affair of Iriſh politicks. That matter was always taken up without concert, but in general from the operation of our known liberal principles in government, in commerce, in religion, in every thing: it was taken up favourably for Ireland, where ſome local intereſts bore hard upon the members. They acted on the ſenſe of their conſtituents; upon ideas, which, though I do not always follow, I can never blame: however, two or three perſons, high in oppoſition, and high in publick eſteem, ran great riſks in their boroughs on the occaſion. But all this was without any particular plan. I need not ſay, that Ireland was, in that affair, much obliged to the liberal mind and enlarged underſtanding of Charles Fox. Mr. Townſhend, Lord Mid-

Middleton, and others, likewiſe, diſtinguiſhed themſelves. On reviewing the whole of that affair, which gave riſe to all the ſubſequent manœuvres, I am convinced, that the whole of what has this day been done, might have been at that time effected; but then the miniſter muſt have taken it up as a great plan of national policy, and paid with his perſon in every lodgment of his approach. He muſt have uſed that influence to quiet prejudice, which he has ſo often uſed to corrupt principle; and I know that, if he had, he muſt have ſucceeded. Many of the moſt active in oppoſition would have given him an unequivocal ſupport. The corporation of London, and the great body of the London Weſt-India Merchants and Planters, which forms the greateſt maſs of that vaſt intereſt, were diſpoſed to fall in with ſuch a plan; they conſtantly

gave no ſort of diſcountenance to what was done, or what was propoſed. But theſe are not the kind of objects for which our miniſters bring out the heavy artillery of the ſtate; therefore, as thoſe things ſtood at that time, a great deal more was not practicable.—Laſt year, another propoſition was brought for the relief of Ireland; it was ſtarted without any communication with a ſingle perſon of activity in the country party, and, as it ſhould ſeem, without any kind of concert with government: it appeared to me extremely raw and indigeſted. The behaviour of Lord North on the opening of that buſineſs was the exact tranſcript of his conduct on the Iriſh queſtion of the former ſeſſion: it was a mode of proceeding, which his nature has wrought into the texture of his politicks, and which is inſeparable from them. He choſe to abſent himſelf on the propoſition, and during

during the agitation of that buſineſs, although the buſineſs of the houſe is that alone for which he has any kind of reliſh, or, as I am told, can be perſuaded to liſten to with any degree of attention: but he was willing to let it take its courſe. If it ſhould paſs without any conſiderable difficulty, he would bring his acquieſcence to tell for merit in Ireland; and he would have the credit, out of his indolence, of giving quiet to that country. If difficulties ſhould ariſe on the part of England, he knew that the houſe was ſo well trained, that he might at his pleaſure call us from the hotteſt ſcent. As he acted in his uſual manner, and upon his uſual principles, oppoſition acted upon theirs, and rather generally ſupported the meaſure. As to myſelf, I expreſſed a diſapprobation at the practice of bringing imperfected and undigeſted projects into the houſe, before

means

means were uſed to quiet the clamours which a miſconception of what we were doing might occaſion at home, and before meaſures were ſettled with men of weight and authority in Ireland, in order to render our acts uſeful and acceptable to that country. I ſaid, that the only thing which could make the influence of the crown (enormous without as well as within the houſe) in any degree tolerable, was, that it might be employed to give ſomething of order and ſyſtem to the proceedings of a popular aſſembly; that government being ſo ſituated as to have a large range of proſpect, and, as it were, a bird-view of every thing, they might ſee diſtant dangers and diſtant advantages, which were not ſo viſible to thoſe who ſtood on the common level: they might beſides obſerve, from this advantage, things in their relative and combined ſtate, which people locally

Business of ministers, in managing the system — to narrow men's ideas — to confirm prejudices — inflame vulgar passions — to abate all sorts of popular rights & privileges.

cally instructed and partially informed could behold only in an insulated and unconnected manner: but that, for many years past, we suffered under all the evils, without any one of the advantages, of a government influence; that the business of ministers, or of those who acted as such, had been still further to contract the narrowness of man's ideas, to confirm inveterate prejudices, to inflame vulgar passions, and to abate all sorts of popular rights and privileges; so far from methodizing the business of the house, they had let all things run into an inextricable confusion, and had left affairs of the most delicate policy wholly to chance.

After I had expressed myself with the warmth I felt on seeing all order and government burst under the ruins of liberty, and after I had made my protest against

liberty ruined

againſt the inſufficiency of the propoſitions, I ſupported the principle of enlargement which they aimed at, though ſhort and ſomewhat wide of the mark, giving as my ſole reaſon, that the more frequently thoſe matters came into diſcuſſion, the more it would tend to diſpel fears and to eradicate prejudices.

This was the only part I took; the detail was in the hands of Lord Newhaven and Lord Beauchamp, with ſome aſſiſtance from Earl Nugent, and a few independent gentlemen of Iriſh property. The dead weight of the miniſter being removed, the houſe recovered its tone and elaſticity. We had a temporary appearance of deliberate character: the buſineſs was debated freely on both ſides, and with ſufficient temper; and the ſenſe of the members being influenced by nothing but what will naturally influence men unbought,

unbought, their reaſon and their preju-dice: theſe two principles had a fair con-flict, and prejudice was obliged to give way to reaſon;—a majority appeared, on a diviſion, in favour of the propoſi-tions.

As theſe proceedings got out of doors, Glaſgow and Mancheſter, and I think Liverpool, began to move, but in a man-ner much more ſlow and languid than formerly; and nothing, in my opinion, would have been leſs difficult, than en-tirely to have overborne their oppoſition. The London Eaſt-India trade was, as on the former occaſion, ſo on this, perfectly liberal and quiet; and there is abroad ſo much reſpect for the united wiſdom of the houſe, when ſuppoſed to act upon a fair view of political ſituation, that I ſcarcely ever remember any conſiderable uneaſineſs out of doors, when the moſt

Minister wholly regardless of the dignity of the House of Commons — & that House a miserable house.

active members, and those of most property and consideration, in the minority, have joined themselves to the administration. Many factious people in the towns mentioned began, indeed, to revile Lord North, and to reproach his neutrality as treacherous and ungrateful to those who had so heartily and so warmly entered into all his views with regard to America.

That noble Lord, whose decided character it is to give way to the lateſt and neareſt pleaſure, without any ſort of regard to diſtant conſequences of any kind, thought fit to appear, on this ſignification of the pleaſure of thoſe his worthy friends and partizans, and, putting himſelf at the head of the *poſſe Scaccarii*, wholly regardleſs of the dignity and conſiſtency of our miſerable houſe, drove the propoſitions entirely out of

doors

doors, by a majority newly ſummoned to duty.

In order to atone to Ireland for this gratification to Mancheſter, he graciouſly permitted, or rather forwarded, two bills; that for encouraging the growth of tobacco, and that for giving a bounty on exportation of hemp from Ireland. They were brought in by two very worthy members, and on good principles: but I was ſorry to ſee them; and, after expreſſing my doubts of their propriety, left the houſe. Little elſe was ſaid upon them. My objections were two: the firſt, that the cultivation of thoſe weeds (if one of them could be at all cultivated to profit) was adverſe to the introduction of a good courſe of agriculture; the other, that the encouragement given to them, tended to eſtabliſh that miſchievous policy of conſidering Ireland as a

country of ſtaple, and a producer of raw materials.

When the rejection of the firſt propoſition, and the acceptance of the laſt, had jointly, as it was natural, raiſed a very ſtrong diſcontent in Ireland, Lord Rockingham, who had frequently ſaid that there never ſeemed a more opportune time for the relief of Ireland, than that moment when Lord North had rejected all rational propoſitions for its relief, without conſulting, I believe, any one living, did what he is not very often willing to do; but he thought this an occaſion of magnitude enough to juſtify an extraordinary ſtep:—he went into the cloſet, and made a ſtrong repreſentation to the King; which was not ill received, and I believe produced good effects. He then made the motion in the Houſe of Lords which you may recollect; but he

was content to withdraw it, on the ſolemn promiſe of miniſtry, that they would, in the receſs of parliament, prepare a plan for the benefit of Ireland, and have it in readineſs to produce the next meeting. You may recollect that Lord Gower became in a particular manner bound for the fulfilling this engagement. Even this did not ſatisfy; and moſt of the minority were very unwilling that parliament ſhould be prorogued until ſomething effectual on the ſubject ſhould be done: particularly as we ſaw that the diſtreſſes, diſcontents, and armaments of Ireland, were encreaſing every day; and we were not ſo much loſt to common ſenſe, as not to know the wiſdom and efficacy of early conceſſion in circumſtances ſuch as ours.

The ſeſſion was now at an end. The miniſters, inſtead of attending to a duty that

Ministers has never had of doing their duty — employed in endeavours to ruin those that remind them of it — this usual to Ministers.

that was ſo urgent on them, employed themſelves, as uſual, in endeavours to deſtroy the reputation of thoſe who were bold enough to remind them of it. They cauſed it to be induſtriouſly circulated through the nation, that the diſtreſſes of Ireland were of a nature hard to be traced to the true ſource; that they had been monſtrouſly magnified; and that, in particular, the official reports from Ireland had given the lie (that was their pleaſure) to Lord Rockingham's repreſentations; and, attributing the origin of the Iriſh proceedings wholly to us, they aſſerted that every thing done in parliament upon the ſubject was with a view of ſtirring up rebellion; "that neither the Iriſh le-
"giſlature, nor their conſtituents, had
"ſignified any diſſatisfaction at the relief
"obtained (in the ſeſſion preceding the
"laſt); that, to convince both of the im-
"propriety of their peaceable conduct,
"oppoſition,

" oppoſition, by making demands in the " name of Ireland, pointed out what ſhe " might extort from Great Britain; that " the facility with which relief was (for- " merly) granted, inſtead of ſatisfying " oppoſition, was calculated to create new " demands—theſe demands, as they in- " terfered with the commerce of Great " Britain, were certain of being oppoſed; " a circumſtance which could not fail to " create that deſirable confuſion which ſuits " the views of the party—that they (the " Iriſh) had long felt their own miſery, " without knowing well from whence it " came—our worthy patriots, by point- " ing out Great Britain as the cauſe of " Iriſh diſtreſs, may have ſome chance of " rouſing Iriſh reſentment." This I quote from a pamphlet as perfectly contemptible in point of writing, as it is falſe in its facts, and wicked in its deſign; but, as it is written under the authority

of

of miniſters, by one of their principal literary penſioners, and was circulated with great diligence, and, as I am credibly informed, at a conſiderable expence to the public, I uſe the words of that book, to let you ſee in what manner the friends and patrons of Ireland, the heroes of your parliament, repreſented all efforts for your relief here; what means they took to diſpoſe the minds of the people towards that great object; and what encouragement they gave to all who ſhould chooſe to exert themſelves in your favour. Their unwearied endeavours were not wholly without ſucceſs, and the unthinking people in many places became ill affected towards us on this account; for the miniſters proceeded in your affairs juſt as they did with regard to thoſe of America:—they always repreſented you as a parcel of blockheads, without ſenſe, or even feeling; that all your words were

were only the echoes of faction here; and, as you have ſeen above, that you had not underſtanding enough to know that your trade was cramped by reſtrictive acts of the Britiſh parliament, unleſs we had, for factious purpoſes, given you the information.

They were ſo far from giving the leaſt intimation of the meaſures which have ſince taken place, that thoſe, who were ſuppoſed the moſt to know their intentions, declared them impoſſible, in the actual ſtate of the two kingdoms; and ſpoke of nothing but an act of union, as the only way that could be found of giving freedom of trade to Ireland, conſiſtently with the intereſts of this kingdom. Even when the ſeſſion opened, Lord North declared, that he did not know what remedy to apply to a diſeaſe, of the cauſe of which he was ignorant;

and, not being then entirely reſolved how far they ſhould ſubmit to your energy, they, by anticipation, ſet the above author, or ſome of his aſſociates, to fill the news-papers with invectives againſt us as diſtreſſing the miniſter by extravagant demands in favour of Ireland.

I need not inform you that every thing they aſſerted of the ſteps taken in Ireland, as the reſult of our machinations, was utterly falſe and groundleſs. For myſelf, I ſincerely proteſt to you, that I neither wrote a word nor received a line upon any matter relative to the trade of Ireland, or to the politicks of it, from the beginning of the laſt ſeſſion to the day that I was honoured with your letter (of December 20th, 1779). It would be an affront to the talents in the Iriſh parliament to ſay one word more.

What

Raising an army, & by it exhorting ena
from government, laudable

What was done in Ireland during that period, in and out of parliament, never will be forgotten:—you raiſed an army, new in its kind, and adequate to its purpoſes. It effected its ends without its exertion. It was not under the authority of law moſt certainly; but it derived from an authority ſtill higher: and, as they ſay of faith, it is not contrary to reaſon, but above it; ſo this army did not ſo much contradict the ſpirit of the law, as ſuperſede it. What you did in the legiſlative body is above all praiſe. By your proceeding with regard to the ſupplies, you revived the grand characteriſtick benefit of parliament, which was on the point of being entirely loſt amongſt us. Theſe ſentiments I never concealed, and never ſhall; and Mr. Fox expreſſed them with his uſual power when he ſpoke on the occaſion.

The most violent opposition to the crown

All this is very honourable to you; but in what light muſt we ſee it? How are we to conſider your armament without commiſſion from the crown, when ſome of the firſt people in this kingdom have been refuſed arms at the time they did not only not reject, but ſolicited, the King's commiſſions. Here to arm and embody would be repreſented as little leſs than high treaſon, if done on private authority: with you it receives the thanks of a privy counſellor of Great Britain, who obeys the Iriſh Houſe of Lords in that point with pleaſure, and is made ſecretary of ſtate the moment he lands here, for his reward. You ſhortened the credit given to the crown for ſix months; you hung up the publick credit of your kingdom by a thread; you refuſed to raiſe any taxes, whilſt you confeſſed the publick debt and publick exigencies to be great and urgent beyond example;

example :—you certainly acted in a great ſtyle, and on ſound and invincible principles; but, if we, in the oppoſition which fills Ireland with ſuch loyal honors, had even attempted, what we never did even attempt, the ſmalleſt delay, or the ſmalleſt line taken off the ſupply, in order to a conſtitutional coertion of the crown, we ſhould have been decried, by all the court and tory mouths of this kingdom, as a deſperate faction aiming at the direct ruin of the country, and to ſurrender it bound hand and foot to a foreign enemy. For actually doing what we never ventured to attempt, you have paid your court with ſuch addreſs, and have won ſo much favour with his Majeſty and his cabinet, that they have, of their ſpecial grace and mere motion, raiſed you to new titles; and, for the firſt time, in a ſpeech from the throne, complimented you with the appellation of "faithful and loyal;"

and,

Parliament a market overt for legalizing a base traffick of votes & pensions.
Means of coercion to the crown & parliament inverted.

and, in order to insult our low-spirited and degenerate obedience, have thrown these epithets and your resistance together in our teeth. What do you think were the feelings of every man, who looks upon parliament in an higher light than that of a market overt for legalising a base traffick of votes and pensions, when he saw you employ such means of coertion to the crown, in order to coerce parliament through that medium? How much his Majesty is pleased with his part of the civility must be left to his own taste; but, as to us, you declared to the world, that you knew that the sole way of bringing us to reason, was to apply yourselves to the true source of all our opinions, and the only motive to all our conduct. Now, it seems, you think yourselves affronted, because a few of us express some indignation at the minister, who has thought fit to strip us stark naked,

The state of the British parliament with respect to Ireland.

naked, and expoſe the true ſtate of our poxed and peſtilential habit to the world. Think or ſay what they will in Ireland, I ſhall ever think it a crime hardly to be expiated by his blood. He might, and ought, by a longer continuance, or by an earlier meeting of parliament, to have given our conceſſion the air of benignity, by making it a voluntary act; or he might have given us the credit of ſome wiſdom in foreſeeing and anticipating an approaching force:—ſo far from it, Lord Gower, coming out of his own cabinet, declares that one principal cauſe of his reſignation was his not being able to prevail on the preſent miniſter to give any ſort of application to this buſineſs. Even on the late meeting, nothing determinate could be drawn from him, or from any of his aſſociates, until you had actually paſſed the ſhort money-bill, which meaſure they flattered themſelves, and aſſured

others, you would never come up to. Diſappointed in their expectation of ſeeing the ſiege raiſed, they ſurrendered at diſcretion.

Judge, my dear Sir, of our ſurprize at finding your cenſure directed againſt thoſe whoſe only crime conſiſted in accuſing the miniſters of not having prevented your demands by our graces; of not having given you the natural advantages of your country, in the moſt ample, the moſt early, and the moſt liberal manner; and for not having relaxed authority in ſuch a manner as to enſure friendſhip. That you ſhould make the panegyrick of the miniſters, is what I expected; becauſe, in praiſing their bounty, you paid a juſt compliment to your own force: but, that you ſhould rail at us, either individually or collectively, is what I can ſcarcely think a natural

natural proceeding.—I can eaſily conceive, that gentlemen might grow frightened at what they had done; that they might imagine they had undertaken a buſineſs above their hand; that the inſtruments of their power might be too vaſt and unmanageable for their direction; that, having obtained a ſtate of independence for their country, they meant to take the deſerted helm into their own hands, and to ſupply by their very real abilities the total inſufficiency of the nominal government: all theſe might be real, and might be very juſtifiable motives for their reconciling themſelves cordially to the preſent court-ſyſtem; but I do not ſo well diſcern the reaſons that could induce them, at the firſt feeble dawning of life in this country, to do all in their power to caſt a cloud over it, and to prevent the leaſt hope of our effecting the neceſſary re-

Reformations in the constitution necessary.

reformations which are aimed at in our conſtitution and in our national œconomy.

But, it ſeems, I was ſilent at the paſſing the reſolution. Why, what had I to ſay? If I thought them too much, I ſhould have been accuſed of an endeavour to inflame England. If I ſhould repreſent them as too little, I ſhould have been charged with a deſign of fomenting the diſcontents of Ireland into actual rebellion. The Treaſury Bench repreſented that the affair was a matter of ſtate; they repreſented it truly: I, therefore, only aſked, whether they knew their propoſitions to be ſuch as would ſatisfy Ireland; for, if they were ſo, they would ſatisfy me. This did not indicate that I thought them too ample. In this very ſilence, however diſhonourable to parliament, there was one advantage, that the whole paſſed, as far as it is gone, with compleat unanimity,

unanimity, and ſo quietly, that there was no time left to execute any oppoſition to it out of doors.

In the Weſt-India buſineſs, reaſoning on what had lately paſſed in the parliament of Ireland, and on the mode in which it was opened here, I thought I ſaw much matter of perplexity; but I have now better reaſon than ever to be pleaſed with my ſilence.

If I had ſpoken, one of the honeſt and ableſt men in the Iriſh parliament, would probably have thought my obſervations an endeavour to ſow diſſention, which he was reſolved to prevent; and one of the moſt ingenious and one of the moſt amiable men, that ever graced yours, or any Houſe of parliament, might have looked upon it as *a chimera*. Indeed, in the ſilence I obſerved, I was

ſtrongly countenanced (to ſay no more of it) by every gentleman of Ireland that I had the honour of converſing with in London. The only word, for that reaſon, which I ſpoke, was to reſtrain a worthy country member, who had received ſome communication from a great trading place in the county he repreſented, which, if it had been opened to the houſe, would have led to a perplexing diſcuſſion of one of the moſt troubleſome matters that could ariſe in this buſineſs. I got up to put a ſtop to it; and, I believe, if you knew what the topic was, you would commend my diſcretion.

That it ſhould be a matter of public diſcretion in me to be ſilent on the affairs of Ireland, is what, on all accounts, I bitterly lament. I ſtated to the houſe what I felt; and I felt, as ſtrongly as human ſenſibility can feel, the extinction

of

of my parliamentary capacity when I wiſhed to uſe it moſt. When I came into this parliament, juſt fourteen years ago, then, in vulgar opinion at leaſt, the preſiding council of the greateſt empire exiſting, (and perhaps, all things conſidered, that ever did exiſt,) obſcure and a ſtranger as I was, I conſidered myſelf as raiſed to the higheſt dignity to which a creature of our ſpecies could aſpire. In that opinion, one of the chief pleaſures in my ſituation, what was firſt and uppermoſt in my thoughts, was the hope (without injury to this country) to be ſomewhat uſeful to the place of my birth and education, which, in many reſpects, internal and external, I thought ill and impolitically governed: but when I found, that the houſe, ſurrendering itſelf to the guidance, not of an authority grown out of experience, wiſdom, and integrity, but of the accidents of court favour, had become

The house of commons so corrupt, that Burke felt himself degraded by being in it.

become the ſport of the paſſions of men, at once raſh and puſillanimous,—that it had even got into the habit of refuſing every thing to reaſon, and ſurrendering every thing to force,—all my power of obliging either my country or individuals was gone; all the luſtre of my imaginary rank was tarniſhed, and I felt degraded even by my elevation. I ſaid this, or ſomething to this effect. If it gives umbrage to Ireland, I am ſorry for it: it was the reaſon I gave for my ſilence, and it was, as far as it went, the true one.

With you, this ſilence of mine, and of others, was repreſented as factious, and as a diſcountenance to the meaſure of your relief.—Do you, then, think as children?—If it had been our wiſh to embroil matters, and, for the ſake of diſtreſſing miniſtry, to commit the two kingdoms in a diſpute, we had nothing

to

to do but (without at all condemning the propoſitions) to have gone into the commercial detail of the objects of them. It could not have been refuſed to us; and you know the nature of buſineſs ſo well, that we muſt have cauſed ſuch delay, and given riſe during that delay to ſuch diſcuſſions, as all the wiſdom of your favourite miniſter could never have ſettled. But, indeed, you miſtake your men: we tremble at the idea of a diſunion of theſe two nations. The only thing in which we differ with you, is this, that we do not think your attaching yourſelves to the court, and quarrelling with the independent part of this people, is the way to promote the union of two free countries, or the holding them together by the moſt natural and ſalutary ties.

You will be frightened when you ſee this

this long letter; I ſmile, when I conſider the length of it myſelf. I never, that I remember, wrote any of the ſame extent; but it ſhews me, that the reproaches of the country that I once belonged to, and in which I ſtill have a dearneſs of intereſt more than I can juſtify to reaſon, make a greater impreſſion on me than I imagined: but parting words are admitted to be a little tedious, becauſe they are not likely to be renewed. —If it will not be making yourſelf as troubleſome to others, as I am to you, I ſhall be obliged to you, if you will ſhew this, at their greateſt leiſure, to the Speaker, to your excellent kinſman, to Mr. Gratton, Mr. Yelverton, and Mr. Daly; all theſe I have the honour of being perſonally known to, except Mr. Yelverton, to whom I am only known by my obligation to him. If you live in any habits with my old friend the Provoſt,

I ſhall

I ſhall be glad that he, too, ſees this my humble apology.

Adieu!—Once more accept my beſt thanks for the intereſt you take in me: believe that it is received by an heart, not yet ſo old as to have loſt its ſuſceptibility.—All here give you the beſt old-faſhioned wiſhes of the ſeaſon; and believe me, with the greateſt truth, and regard,

My dear Sir,

Your moſt faithful,

And obliged,

Humble ſervant,

Beconsfield, New-Year's-Day, 1780.

EDMUND BURKE.

I am frightened at the trouble I give you and our friends; but I recollect you

are moſtly lawyers, and habituated to read long, tireſome papers, and, where your friendſhip is concerned, without a fee. I am ſure, too, you will not act the lawyer, and ſcrutinize too minutely every expreſſion which my haſte may make me uſe.—I forgot to mention my friend O'Hara, and others; but you will communicate it as you pleaſe.

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——— That ſacred ſenſe of woe,
Which none but Friends and Lovers know.
AKENSIDE.

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